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Paul Dräger (trans.), *Ausonius. Mosella*. Trier: Paulinus, 2001. Pp. 160. ISBN 3-87769-167-7. EUR 19.80.

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The *Mosella* by Ausonius is no doubt one of the most beloved Latin poems from late antiquity. Within only 483 lines, the text may be said to form a culmination of Latin poetry in all its variety. It is, among other things, a didactic poem and a travel poem, containing comparisons, epyllia, catalogues of rivers and fish, ecphraseis, and perhaps a partly ideological message. Of this literary work, the masterpiece in Ausonius' oeuvre, several editions are available to readers, such as those by Ternes (Coll. Érasme, Paris 1972) and Green (Oxford 1991). A number of texts with translation are available too, e.g. in English by White (Loeb Classical Library, 1919; 1988), and in German by Bertold Weis (Darmstadt 1989) and Otto Schönberger (Stuttgart 2000). An excellent translation in Dutch was recently published by Patrick Lateur ('Lied van de Moezel', Amsterdam 2001).

Now there is a brand-new text with a facing German translation by Paul Dräger. It is most welcome, for it has many things to offer.

First, there is the German translation itself. Whereas Weis rendered Ausonius' lines in German hexameters that are rather difficult to read and do not really look like poetry at all, and Schönberger limited himself to a version in prose, D. has attempted to keep much of the poetic quality of the original, by choosing a form that is more suitable for the German language, based on 'blank verse' (iambic lines of five feet, without rhyme). Every Latin line has been rendered by two lines in German, one longer line of five to seven ictuses, and a shorter, 'epodic' line of two to four ones.

To illustrate this, let me quote the opening lines of the poem in D.'s version:

Gekreuzt hatt' ich der schnellen Nahe Flut,
die reich an Nebel strömt vorbei,
bewunderte der neuen Mauern Bau,
durch die Alt-Vincum war verstärkt,
wo Gallien einst sein Cannae hat erlebt
und Latien gleichgekommen ist
und unbeweint auf Ackerfluren liegt
die Schar, im Tod beraubt der Ehre.
Indem ich einsam dort den Marsch beginn'
durch unwegsames Waltgebiet
und niemals eine Spur erblicken kann
von menschlich feiner Lebensart,
passiere ich Dumnissus, stets verdorrt,
wo rings die Felder haben Durst,
und dann Tabernae, reich an frischem Nass,

weil durch das Jahr die Quelle fließt,
sowie der Sauromaten Saatgefild,
das kürzlich Siedlern ward zuteil.
Und endlich an der Belger vordrem Rand
ich dann Neumagen erst erblicke,
wo die berühmte Feste einst erbaut,
der Gott geworden: Constantinus.

The result has certainly kept a poetic charm. D. has a good sense of rhythm and sound (his translation shows many sound effects, as the example above may prove). To the reviewer's taste, however, the translation still seems to be rather long. Although the first impression may be otherwise, given the visual aspect of relatively short lines, the truth of the matter is that every Latin hexameter has been rendered in no fewer than nine iambic feet. One could also say: what we read are essentially very long German lines, split in two separate halves. D. clearly states that a iambic line in German of five or six feet would not be sufficient to render all elements of a Latin hexameter. Writing a greater number of lines than the original could be an option, of course, but this is explicitly rejected because of the 'chaos' that it would produce for the reader (p. 145). Obviously, there is room for dissent here.

Perhaps even more valuable than D.'s translation are his comments to the text. Students of the *Mosella* know Paul Dräger from some groundbreaking articles on the structure and literary texture of the poem (especially in *Gymnasium* 104 [1997] 435-461 and 107 [2000] 223-228). In these studies, D. convincingly shows that Ausonius has worked with complex patterns in which the number of 'seven' plays a central role. Notably the interpretation of the catalogues in the poem has greatly progressed as a result of these analyses.

In the new edition, the reader is served with convenient lists of rivers and fish names (including their equivalents in German, 'Trierisch' and 'Luxemburgisch'), and with succinct notes and a general introduction, in which D.'s new insights have been made accessible to the general audience. It is perhaps this feature which makes the volume a real improvement on existing editions. Theory becomes manifest even in the translation itself. The identification of some tributaries is a matter of debate, but in D.'s view the solution is clear:

ertragreich auch an fruchtbarn Ufern streift vorbei
Alzette=Alisontia (line 371).

The last words wittily sum up an important conclusion of the 1997 *Gymnasium* article. To mention another point: in the first four Latin lines of the poem, the last letter is printed in bold, resulting in the acrostichon MOSAE.

The introduction deals with most of the themes one may expect here: the biography and works of Ausonius, the structure and themes of the poem, its reception, the time of composition (the 'terminus ante quem' is argued to be 375), and the poet's intention (with a number of scholars, D. pleads for a political and propagandistic program), but two paragraphs clearly stand out. First, there is a truly excellent section on the 'hebdomadic principle of composition' (pp. 126-131). Second, D. extensively discusses and illustrates his principles of translation (pp. 143-151), also a highly laudable feature. If translations of ancient texts are to be taken seriously as works of science, such methodological sections are absolutely necessary. In the end, not every reader will be convinced by D.'s arguments for his choice of metre, but his methods are clearly set out and made explicit.

An index and bibliography conclude this attractively designed book, in which all explanatory texts are enlivened by a fair amount of illustrations.

D. deserves full credit for his modern and accurate translation, and all the extras it brings. The book may be considered to set an excellent example: this is a creative translation based on thorough, valuable research. What more do we wish?

More texts by Ausonius perhaps. And there is more to come: in the well-known Tusculum series a new edition of works by Ausonius has been announced, edited by the same Paul Dräger. That volume, containing the *Mosella*, the correspondence with Paulinus, and the *Bissula*, will be published before the end of 2002.